

VZCZCXRO3128  
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHSW #1947/01 2911639  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 181639Z OCT 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BERN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3280  
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2614

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERN 001947

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA AND EUR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [SZ](#)  
SUBJECT: SWISS VIEWS ON LEBANON, SYRIA, AND HAMAS

REF: SECSTATE 172274

Classified By: Poloff Eric Lundberg, Reasons 1.4 b/d

1.(C) Summary: Switzerland strongly supports the Government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and shares our concern over possible Syrian machinations in Lebanon. The Swiss believe Syrian officials are genuinely interested in ending their isolation, even if they are going about it in a completely counterproductive manner. The Swiss see no substitute for engaging Syria and Hamas and believe this can be helpful in sending a tough message. Swiss DFA Special Advisor on the Middle East Nicolas Lang would welcome the opportunity to meet with USG officials in Washington to share views on the current situation -- a visit Embassy believes would be helpful towards aligning Swiss policy more closely with our own. End summary.

-----  
Swiss support Siniora  
-----

2.(C) Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Ambassador Nicolas Lang told Poloff on October 18 that Switzerland was solidly behind the Siniora government in Beirut. He had also learned from the Israeli Embassy the previous day about possible Syrian moves along the lines described in reftel. Lang said he considered Siniora to be a very reasonable man and among the most constructive public figures in Lebanon. Lang observed that Damascus and Hezbollah would make a serious error in undermining the current government.

-----  
Readout of trip to Damascus: Syria in a bubble  
-----

3.(C) Having recently met in Damascus with Vice President Shar'a, Foreign Minister Mouallem, and other officials, Lang observed that Syrian officials were unreceptive to his advice to offer confidence building measures on Lebanon or relations with Israel in general. Lang described the Syrians as "living in a bubble" and subject to "strange ways" in how they go about what Lang earnestly believes to be a quest for peace and economic growth. Shar'a, in particular, kept to the theme that Syria could only negotiate on, say, the demarcation of its border with Lebanon, as part of a comprehensive agreement on the Golan Heights and other remaining disputes. Lang's interpretation was that the Asad government felt too vulnerable to pursue anything less. On Syria's alliance with Iran, Shar'a quipped, "when one has one friend, one is prone to dine with him quite frequently."

4.(C) Lang reiterated his long-held conviction that a comprehensive peace between Israel and Syria was feasible, along the lines outlined by Britain and the United States several years ago. Lang disagreed with the USG's stance that

the Syrian and Hamas governments should be isolated, insisting that more could be achieved through an engagement that did not shy away from conveying a tough message. Along these lines, he mentioned that Ambuehl was considering a visit to Damascus in the near future. Poloff emphasized the importance of not allowing Damascus to believe it could divide the international consensus on Lebanon and the Road Map to peace in the Middle East.

-----  
Hamas: Hudna, with less pressure?  
-----

5.(C) Regarding Hamas, Lang said he was concerned how Hamas would react to Palestinian Authority President Abbas' expected appointment of a technocratic government. Hamas was "not in touch with reality," Lang agreed, but there were grounds for some hope, considering the recent Hamas-produced paper on "hudna" or a cease-fire with Israel. From his discussions with more "moderate" Hamas officials, Lang drew the conclusion that a workable relationship with Israel could develop if Hamas leaders had less pressure from both inside and outside the Palestinian community. This would depend, Lang added, on the role Hamas chose to play once Abbas decided on the next PA government.

-----  
U.S.-Swiss Consulations in Washington?  
-----

6.(C) Reviewing the recent U.S.-Swiss bilateral "Framework" talks between Ambuehl and EUR Assistant Secretary Dan Fried, Poloff and Lang observed that one deliverable called for a Swiss Middle East expert to visit Washington for a

BERN 00001947 002 OF 002

discussion. Lang said that he would welcome the opportunity to speak with NEA officials, if there is interest.

-----  
Comment  
-----

7.(C) The Swiss do not agree with efficacy of isolating Syria or Hamas, but share our view on what each needs to do to play a constructive role in the region. Unfortunately, our differing approaches -- illustrated most dramatically by Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey's strident criticism of the Israeli action in Lebanon last summer -- can contribute to an unhelpful mixed Western message to the region. Embassy Bern believes it would be valuable for NEA officials to meet with Ambassador Lang in an effort to coordinate U.S.-Swiss approaches to both the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader obstructionist behavior of Syria.

CONEWAY